Student Council Report

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Position: Vice-President Community
Date of Council: 24/03/21

Please find below a summary of the 4 main projects I have been working on since the last meeting of Student Council:

1. ADVOCATING FOR STUDENTS ON PLACEMENT

One of the main areas that I am focusing on this academic year is ensuring there is adequate support for students going on placements throughout the year.

Evidence: Towards the end of the last academic year the students’ union gained feedback from students across the university that highlighted that students from the school of Health & Social Work, the school of Life and Medical science, the school of education and the school of creative arts were adversely affected by the pandemic and the place that was affected the most was their placements.

Explanation:

Sense my last report I held a placement student forum that was targeted as health, social and education students, our target was 50 students (this was low due to many of these students were on placement as the time) for which we had 60 students exceeding our goal while also having additional staffing members from the school from HSK, LMS and EDU which the union is grateful for their attendance. From this collated the findings from the forum.

I have continued to highlight the differences and issues that have come to the for front because of the pandemic faced by creating a video with students from the schools of HSK, LMS and EDU. This video currently has been viewed 889 times and has been shared to the wider higher education sector by WonkHe.

To continue to voice these issues wider I have reached out to local MP’s to showcase the core issues that continue and consistently come up. From these contacts has led to the meeting with a MP to highlight these issues and more will be meeting to come in next week or two. Having contacted and met with local MP’s to advocate for consistency for student within the health and social work setting, to ensure that these are treated the same a student by lobby for access to testing and vaccinating. I have continued to work with school to work on the issues that can be support within the university and at schools, with the lobbying for key worker letters to allow these students avoid fines and gain access to childcare provisions While still connecting regularly with student rep’s and SCO’s to ensure that I am still lobbying for current issues.

Working closely with student’s and SCO’s will give them the opportunity to ensure that their issues are being represented at all levels of the university. This sits under theme 2: student insight.
2. PRIVATE RENTED ACCOMMODATION

With the rapid changing circumstance of the pandemic, we are aware that students have had a challenging time, are strapped for cash and are paying for private accommodation that they not able to access due to the national lockdown.

**Evidence:** During winter break while the union and university were closed, the country went into yet another national lockdown. It was advised that most of students withing higher education were asked to remain at home and not travel back to university. This has resulted in thousands of students across the country to having to pay for private accommodation that they are not able to access.

**Explanation:**

Sense the last student council I have created the copy for the students’ union webpage for the campaign which is now live with the support from our marketing team on our website https://hertfordshire.su/your-say/campaigns/privateaccommodationrentfreeze/. This will pushed promote over next few weeks so that students are aware of this issue, can push for change and get involved.

Trying to get money back into students’ pockets, easing some financial burden on them during this difficult time. From the feedback we have received would make this a good example of one of the student campaigns that would sit under theme 2 of the strategic plan.

3. STUDENT WELLBEING

A priority of mine this year is student wellbeing and mental health, for this I am creating a tool kit for students that gives them the power to sign post themselves to the most appropriate service while ensuring that is student friendly and interactive.

**Evidence:** Over the past 6 months it has been prevalent that everyone’s mental health has been affected, this has been highlighted through research done by your student’s union and from national statistics. Following on from this we have met with partners across the university and within the union to start coming up with content and a creative way to pull all the resources together. Ensuring that the vital service have had a say and we are making the most appropriate resources for students.

**Explanation:**

I have created a student wellbeing guide with the support of the Students’ Union (SU) staff, which is a one stop shop for all the support a student may need collating all the service within the
university, students' union and some external services. The Student Wellbeing Guide was launched on time to talk day on the 4th of February. Since the launch there have been 1853 views (at the point of writing this report), the goal for the first month was to have 1,000 views to the page. We see this to be successful as it has surpassed our expectations by exceeding this goal within the first 2 weeks. Showing the need for a student and staff face signposting system.

The creation of these tool kits will give the power to students to proactively look after their own mental health and to give staff the confidence to have these sensitive conversations.

4. STUDY / COMMUNAL SPACES

A key point for me this year has been the ability for students to come together spaces to socialise and study together.

Evidence: I have had to approach this very carefully this year in line with government guidance. With this I have lobbied that university to ensure that study spaces have been open available for students and ensured that group study areas are still available but in a social distanced way.

Explanation:

Since my last report I have successfully got the Yurts furnished so that they are fit for purpose and will be on campus for when more students return after Easter break.

While also lobby for extra capacity in the LRC on college lane after queuing issues earlier this month and currently lobbying for the reintroduction of a quite space for students to study in without distraction.

Having these spaces give students an alternative place student to go to study and socialise within government guidance, while also give students the opportunity to leave the house get some fresh air.

Further information about the work I do can be found here: https://hertfordshire.su/your-say/electedofficers/vice-president-community/

And my previous reports to Student Council can be found here: https://hertfordshire.su/your-say/student-council/

Thank you for reading!

Kayleigh Malone
Vice-President Community